

CLAIMS

1. A process for producing at least two different propylene polymer grades, in which process the isotacticity of the polymer is changed while keeping the melt flow rate of the polymer at a predetermined level during a transition of production from a first polymer grade to a second, said process being carried out in a polymerization arrangement comprising at least one polymerization reactor, where propylene is polymerized; optionally with comonomers, under polymerization conditions in the presence of hydrogen as a molecular weight controlling agent and a Ziegler-Natta catalyst system, comprising a catalyst component and an external donor, wherein the external donor is changed, but the hydrogen feed is kept at a predetermined level, during a transition of production from the first polymer grade to the second.
2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the external donor is a strongly coordinating donor.
3. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the external donor is selected from the group of silane base donors having the general formula



wherein R''' is a branched aliphatic or cyclic or aromatic group, Me stands for methyl and n is 1 or 2, preferably 2.

4. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the external donor is selected from the group of dicyclopentyl dimethoxysilane (donor D), cyclohexylmethyl dimethoxy silane (donor C), diisopropyl dimethoxysilane, methylcyclohexyldimethoxy silane, di-isobutyl dimethoxysilane, and di-t-butyl dimethoxysilane.
5. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the catalyst system comprises solid catalyst particles, which exhibit active sites evenly distributed throughout the particles.

6. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the catalyst particles are not supported on any external carrier.

7. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the catalyst component of
5 the catalytic system comprises a compound of a transition metal of Group 3 to 10 of the Periodic Table, or of an actinide or lanthanide, and is obtained by forming a liquid-liquid emulsion system, which contains a homogeneous solution of at least one catalyst component, said solution being dispersed in a liquid medium, and forming the dispersed phase of the liquid-liquid emulsion system, solidifying said dispersed droplets to form solid catalyst
10 particles having a predetermined size range, and removing the solvent from the reaction mixture in order to obtain said solid catalyst particles.

8. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the Ziegler-Natta catalyst system comprises cocatalysts, preferably alkyl aluminium compounds.

15 9. The process according to any of claims 1 to 8, wherein the hydrogen feed is kept essentially at the predetermined level during the production of the second polymer grade.

10. A process for producing in a polymerization reactor arrangement at least two propylene
20 polymers having essentially the same level of MFR but different isotacticity, by polymerizing propylene monomers optionally with comonomers in the presence of a catalytic system comprising a catalyst component and an external donor, which process comprises preparing in optional order

25 – a first polymer having a predetermined MFR and a first degree of isotacticity in the presence of said catalytic system using a first external donor; and
– a second polymer having essentially the same predetermined MFR and a second degree of isotacticity in the presence of said catalytic system using a second external donor;
– wherein the hydrogen feed is maintained at an essentially constant level during the
30 polymerization.

11. The process according to claim 10, wherein the catalyst component of the catalytic system comprises a compound of a transition metal of Group 3 to 10 of the Periodic Table, or of an actinide or lanthanide, and is obtained by forming a liquid-liquid emulsion system, which

contains a homogeneous solution of at least one catalyst component, said solution being dispersed in a liquid medium, and forming the dispersed phase of the liquid-liquid emulsion system, solidifying said dispersed droplets to form solid catalyst particles having a predetermined size range, and removing the solvent from the reaction mixture in order to 5 obtain said solid catalyst particles.

12. The process according to claim 10, comprising using a silane-based external donor having the general formula

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wherein R'' is a branched aliphatic or cyclic or aromatic group, Me stands for methyl and n is 1 or 2, preferably 2.

15 13. The process according to any of claims 10 to 12, wherein the external donor is selected from the group of dicyclopentyl dimethoxysilane (donor D), cyclohexylmethyl dimethoxy silane (donor C), diisopropyl dimethoxysilane, methylcyclohexyldimethoxy silane, di-isobutyl dimethoxysilane, and di-t-butyl dimethoxysilane.

20 14. The process according to any of claims 10 to 13, wherein the catalytic system comprises a catalyst component containing as essential components magnesium, titanium and halogen, a cocatalyst compound and an external donor.

25 15. The process according to any of claims 10 to 14, wherein the catalyst is in the form of particles having a predetermined size range.

16. The process according to claim 15, wherein the catalyst component is preferably used in the form of particles having an average size range of 5 to 200 μm , preferably 10 to 100, in particular 20 to 50 μm .

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17. The process according to any of claims 10 to 16, wherein the catalyst system comprises catalyst particles, which exhibit active sites evenly distributed throughout the particles.

18. The process according to any of claims 10 to 17, wherein the catalyst particles contain no external carrier.

19. The process according to any of claims 10 to 18, wherein the catalyst component is prepared according to a liquid-liquid two phase emulsion method comprising

- preparing a solution of a complex of a Group 2 metal and an electron donor or a precursor thereof in an organic liquid reaction medium,
- reacting said complex, in solution, with at least one compound of a transition metal to produce an emulsion, the dispersed phase of which contains more than 50 mol-% of the Group 2 metal in said complex,
- maintaining the droplets of said dispersed phase within the average size range 5 to 200 μm by agitation in the presence of an emulsion stabilizer and solidifying said droplets, and
- recovering, washing and drying said particles to obtain said catalyst component.

20. The process according to any of claims 10 to 19, wherein the transition metal is a compound of a Group 4 metal.

21. The process according to any of claims 10 to 20, wherein the Group 2 metal is magnesium.

22. The process according to any of claims 10 to 21, wherein said organic liquid reaction medium comprises a C₆-C₁₀ aromatic hydrocarbon or a mixture of C₆-C₁₀ aromatic hydrocarbon and C₅ – C₉ aliphatic hydrocarbons.

23. The process according to any of claims 10 to 22, wherein said emulsion is composed of

- a dispersed phase which is TiCl₄/toluene-insoluble oil, having Group 4 metal/Mg mol ratio 0.1 to 10 and of
- a disperse phase which is an oil less dense than the dispersed phase, having Group 4 metal/Mg mol ratio 10 to 100.

24. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the propylene polymers are homopolymers, random copolymers, block copolymers or combinations thereof.

25. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the hydrogen feed is maintained within at most 5 % by volume of a predetermined level during the preparation of the first and the second polymers.

5 26. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the hydrogen feed is maintained within at most 3 % by volume, preferably at most 2 % by volume of a predetermined level during the preparation of the first and the second polymers.

10 27. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the polymerization reactor arrangement comprises at least one reactor selected from liquid (slurry) reactors and gas or vapour phase reactors.

15 28. The process according to claim 27, wherein the polymerization reactor arrangement comprises a cascade of at least two reactors selected from liquid (slurry) reactors and gas or vapour phase reactor.

29. The process according to claim 27 or 28, wherein the slurry reactor is a bulk reactor, preferably a loop reactor.

20 30. The process according to any of the preceding claims, comprising producing a propylene polymer having a Melt Flow Rate (MFR₂) of 0.01 to 1500 g/10 min.

31. The process according to claim 30, comprising producing a propylene polymer having a Melt Flow Rate (MFR₂) of 10 to 300 g/min.

25 32. The process according to claim 30 or 31, wherein the isotacticity of the propylene polymer is above 95, in particular above 98.

30 33. A process for controlling isotacticity of polypropylene polymers by using external donors, comprising

- feeding propylene together with optional comonomers along with hydrogen as a molecular weight controlling agent and a Ziegler-Natta catalyst system, including a catalyst component having as essential components Ti, Mg and Cl cocatalyst and an

external donor, into a polymerization reactor arrangement formed by at least one polymerization reactor and

- polymerizing propylene together with the optional monomers under polymerization conditions in order to obtain a polymer product having a predetermined melt flow rate and isotacticity,

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wherein isotacticity is adjusted by changing the external donor without changing the hydrogen feed and still maintaining the melt flow rate essentially at the same level.

34. The process according to claim 33, wherein the catalyst system comprises solid particles,

10 which exhibit active sites evenly distributed throughout the particles.

35. The process according to claim 34, wherein the catalyst particles contain no external carrier.